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Feb. 25 Iowa Outdoors

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Press Releases from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources

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To: Iowa Association of County Conservation Boards <IACCB@mycountyparks.com>



IOWA OUTDOORS

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES | CONSERVATION AND RECREATION DIVISION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: FEBRUARY 25, 2014

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MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND CAMPSITES GOING QUICKLY

Another polar vortex has the Midwest in its crosshairs but Iowans' attention is focused squarely on

spring and going camping. The reservation window for the Memorial Day Weekend campsites for a Friday arrival opened on Sunday.

By 9 a.m. Tuesday, six state parks had filled all reservable campsites for Memorial Day Weekend that offer electricity or full hook ups.

Camping options for the big holiday weekend in a state park are quickly shrinking.

Campers wanting to spend the holiday weekend at Elinor Bedell, Lake of Three Fires, Lewis and Clark, Pleasant Creek, Viking Lake, and Waubonsie should plan to arrive a few days early for one of the walk up sites with electricity – all the reservation sites have been taken.

Other parks are close to hanging up the no reservations sign.

Ledges, Green Valley, Prairie Rose, Lake Anita and Rock Creek state parks only have the handicap accessible site available. Brushy Creek had one equestrian site; Backbone, McIntosh Woods and Walnut Woods have three; Fairport, Maquoketa Caves and Union Grove have four; Dolliver, George Wyth and Wapsipinicon have six and most include a handicap accessible site.

Lake Geode is not taking reservations until construction on the wastewater system is complete. The park is open and accepting campers while the work is underway.

Most parks will have nonelectric sites available for the Memorial Day Weekend.

“We had a flurry of reservations when campers began getting their sites for a two week stay that includes Memorial Day Weekend,” said Todd Coffelt, chief of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources State Parks Bureau. Campers can make reservations for a site three months ahead of their first night stay.

Not every campsite is available on the reservation system. Parks maintain between 25 and 50 percent of the electric and non electric sites as non-reservation sites, available for walk up camping.

Information on Iowa’s state parks is available online at www.iowadnr.gov including links to the reservations page.

Media Contact: Sherry Arntzen, State Parks Bureau, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-242-6233.

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WITH NEW FARM BILL, ADDITIONAL WINTER PHEASANT HABITAT AVAILABLE

Iowa has 50,000 acres available under a new Conservation Reserve Program called Iowa Pheasant Recovery SAFE. This new CP38 practice requires top quality winter habitat and food for pheasants.

That top quality winter habitat and food is in demand after last Friday’s blizzard devastated pheasant habitat across central and north central Iowa.

About half of Iowa received 3 to 10 inches of wet heavy snow that collapsed most grassy cover. Falling temperatures then turned the wet snow into a white layer of ice. The cover that did not collapse was drifted full of snow from the high winds.

“This was a bad storm for upland game birds,” said Todd Bogenschutz, state upland game biologist for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. “It’s very likely we saw some bird mortality with this blizzard, birds likely trapped under the frozen wet snow.”

For much of northern Iowa most waste grains are now frozen below the snow and birds will be very visible searching for food which will increase their predation. “We need a 50 degree thaw to reduce the ice layer but the forecast calls for frigid temperatures for the next week,” said Bogenschutz.

Landowners have the opportunity to enroll in this program first come first serve until the acres are gone. For more information click on the Iowa Pheasant Recovery link on the DNR’s website at www.iowadnr.gov/habitat

MEDIA CONTACT: Todd Bogenschutz, Upland Game Bird Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-432-2823.

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For more information, contact Laura Wagner with the Iowa DNR Forestry Bureau, at 515-281-6749 or laura.wagner@dnr.iowa.gov.

Alliant Energy customers invited to purchase trees for \$25

ALLIANT ENERGY TO SPONSOR NINE OPERATION RELEAF EVENTS

DES MOINES – A popular program offering landscape quality trees at a deep discount to Alliant Energy customers will be held at nine locations across Iowa this spring.

Alliant Energy’s Operation ReLeaf is a program to help Alliant Energy customers save energy in their homes using trees to provide shade during the summer and create wind breaks during the winter. For maximum energy efficiency, shade trees should be planted within 30 feet of the east and west and evergreens should be planted as a windbreak on the north and west of the home.

Through the program, Alliant Energy residential customers may purchase high quality landscaping trees for \$25 each, on a first-come, first-served basis. These trees typically retail for between \$65 and \$125.

“Planting a diverse mix of trees on your property and in your neighborhood will reduce the likelihood of losing a large number of trees to forest health threats,” said Paul Tauke, state forester and chief of

the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Forestry Bureau.

Tauke said they are encouraging homeowners who do not intend to treat for emerald ash borer to plant a replacement tree within 30 feet of the existing ash tree.

Foresters have been working with local partners to create a state tree inventory that will guide future tree planting efforts to keep a healthy mix of tree species.

Operation ReLeaf has 35 species of trees from which they select 8 to 10 species for each event based on the local tree inventory that will include shade trees, ornamentals and conifers. Shade trees are 6 to 8 feet tall in 5 to 10 gallon containers and conifers are 2 to 3 feet tall.

Just a few of the advantages of yard trees are:

- Decrease in household heating and cooling costs
- Increase in property values
- Decrease in storm water runoff, which may reduce flooding events
- Beauty and personal enjoyment

“All trees are purchased through a bidding process to promote local nurseries,” said Tauke. “This is a great way for homeowners to get a quality tree at an affordable price.”

Advanced order is highly recommended and advance purchase is limited to two trees per household. In the event there are extra trees available on distribution day, those trees will be released for purchase at that time. Order forms are available online at www.alliantenergy.com/releaf.

Workshops lead by experts discussing tree planting and care will be held at all tree distributions. Workshops will cover root flare and proper planting depth, correcting encircling roots, proper mulching and watering, corrective pruning to reduce future storm damage, planning around buildings for energy efficiency and emerald ash borer.

Operation ReLeaf, is administered by the Iowa DNR's Forestry Bureau with assistance from local partners, like county conservation boards, municipalities and county extension offices.

Operation ReLeaf participants must be Alliant Energy residential customers.

Operation ReLeaf Locations

April 23, 4 to 6 p.m.

Thompson, Winnebago County

Winnebago County Fairgrounds, 264 Fairgrounds Dr., Thompson

Tree Planting and Care Workshop: 5 p.m.

Partner: Winnebago County Conservation

April 24, 5 to 6:30 p.m.

Newton, Jasper County

Woodland Park, intersection of N 19th Avenue W and W First Street North, Newton

Tree Planting and Care Workshop: 5:45 p.m.

Partner: City of Newton

April 26, 7:30 to 9 a.m.

Marion, Linn County

Squaw Creek Park, 4305 Squaw Lane, Marion

Tree Planting and Care Workshop: 8:15 a.m.

Partner: Linn County Conservation

April 26, 9 to 11 a.m.

Hiawatha (Hiawatha residents only), Linn County

10th Avenue parking lot of Guthridge Park, 704 Emmons Street, Hiawatha

Tree Planting and Care Workshop: 10 a.m.

Partner: City of Hiawatha

May 1, 4:30 to 6 p.m.

Ogden, Boone County

Don Williams Park, 610 H Ave., Ogden

Tree Planting and Care Workshop: 5:15 p.m.

Partner: Boone County Conservation

May 3, 9 to 11 a.m.

Mount Pleasant, Henry County

Wright Pavilion in McMillan Park, South Walnut Street, Mount Pleasant

Tree Planting and Care Workshop: 10 a.m.

Partner: Henry County Extension

May 8, 5 to 6:30 p.m.

Centerville, Appanoose County

Sharon Bluffs State Park, 25100 520th Street, Centerville

Tree Planting and Care Workshop: 5:45 p.m.

Partner: Appanoose County Conservation Foundation

May 22, 4 to 5:30 p.m.

Williamsburg, Iowa County

USDA Office, 435 North Highland Street, Williamsburg

Tree Planting and Care Workshop: 4:45 p.m.

Partner: Iowa County Extension

May 31, 8:30 to 10 a.m.

Tripoli, Bremer County

Bremer County Extension Office, 720 Seventh Avenue SW, Tripoli

Tree Planting and Care Workshop: 9:15 a.m.

Partner: Bremer County Extension

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DNR TO HOLD LISTENING SESSION ON FALL HUNTING AND TRAPPING REGULATIONS

DES MOINES - The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is hosting public meetings over the Iowa Communications Network on February 26 from 6 to 9 p.m., to listen to the public's thoughts on the hunting and trapping regulations for this fall.

These meetings are part of the process for making rules in state government.

"Any rule changes must be discussed with Iowa's citizens who might be impacted by the changes before the rule changes are proposed. The process helps ensure that rule changes serve the public's wishes and do not impact Iowa's economy," said Dr. Dale Garner, chief of the wildlife bureau.

At each meeting DNR staff will facilitate a discussion about what went well last fall, what didn't, and what changes hunters and trappers would like to see for this fall.

These discussions along with the data that the wildlife bureau collects on harvest and population numbers will be used to develop recommendations for any rule changes this fall. Any changes must be approved by the Natural Resource Commission and then go back to the public for further comment before taking effect next fall.

Meetings will be held in Boone, Calmar, Cedar Falls, Chariton, Council Bluffs, Creston, Davenport, Forest City, Fort Dodge, Johnston, Marshalltown, Ottumwa, Peosta, Sac City, Sergeant Bluff, Sheldon, Solon, Spencer and West Burlington.

Complete ICN locations are available online at www.iowadnr.gov/hunting

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MEETING SET TO DISCUSS PROPOSED BIRD CONSERVATION AREA

CHARITON – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) invites the public to discuss the proposed designation of the Stephens Forest-Thousand Acres region as a state Bird Conservation Area (BCA) at a public meeting on March 11.

The meeting begins at 6:30 p.m. at the Lucas County Conservation Education Center at Pin Oak Marsh, located about 1 mile south of Chariton on the east side of Hwy 14.

Creating Bird Conservation Areas continues to be a high priority for the Iowa DNR.

“The proposed Stephens Forest-Thousand Acres BCA is particularly unique because it contains almost equal amounts of both forest and grassland habitats that provide homes to over half of Iowa’s nesting bird species, many of which are considered to be of greatest conservation need,” said Bruce Ehresman, DNR bird biologist.

“From birds of large forests, including whip-poor-will, cerulean warbler and Louisiana waterthrush, to declining grassland birds like bobolink and Henslow’s sparrow, the three Stephens Forest units and their adjoining grasslands provide an ideal environment to become Iowa’s 19th Bird Conservation Area,” Ehresman said.

As part of the North America Bird Conservation Initiative, the BCA concept focuses on conserving all birds in all habitats, and it focuses conservation efforts on large expanses of particular habitat types, like forests.

Partnerships are the key to the BCA program’s success, and to date more than 50 conservation agencies, conservation organizations, and local community organizations have become BCA partners throughout the state. Each BCA consists of at least one core area of permanently protected bird habitat surrounded by large areas of privately owned land, which also is good bird habitat. Core public lands are managed for all wild birds and especially for those species experiencing regional or continental population declines.

Agency wildlife biologists and private lands specialists work with willing landowners to find ways to improve their properties for birds. The program is entirely voluntary, non-regulatory, and it can result in extra incentives for landowners to make bird habitat improvements.

“By managing to retain healthy oak forests we also are providing crucial habitat for birds that are in trouble, game and nongame birds alike,” said Jessica Flatt, area forester at Stephens State Forest with the DNR. “Designating this new forest BCA also allows the local community and concerned citizens an opportunity to take action to help these birds. Declining species such as American woodcock, wood thrush, and Kentucky warbler will all benefit from the designation of the Stephens Forest-Thousand Acres Bird Conservation Area.”

Besides benefiting declining bird populations, creating BCAs in Iowa also provides an economic boost for the state.

Bird watching is one of the fastest growing pastimes in North America, with an estimated 77 million wildlife watchers in the United States. According to a recent U.S Fish and Wildlife Survey, wildlife watchers in Iowa, alone, now spend up to \$318 million each year in pursuit of this very rewarding hobby.

For more information, contact Ehresman at 515-432-2823 or Flatt at 641-774-4559.

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MICK KLEMESRUD Information Specialist

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